

Washington, DC -- On the first day of Congress's new session, Senator Patrick Leahy (D), Senator Bernie Sanders (I) and Representative Peter Welch (D) Thursday are introducing bills to name Vermont's White Rocks National Recreation Area in honor of former Senator Robert Stafford (R), who died in December.

Leahy and Sanders are introducing the Senate's version of the bill, and Welch is offering the counterpart bill in the House.

The recreation area, in Rutland and Bennington Counties, encompasses 22,758 acres and will be known as The Robert T. Stafford White Rocks National Recreation Area. It was designated a National Recreation Area in the 1984 Wilderness Act, which Stafford largely wrote.

Leahy said, "This is a fitting and lasting way to honor Bob Stafford's enduring legacy. We want this to be a tribute to his work and to his love of Vermont. White Rocks is among his most beloved natural areas in our state, and we know that he and Helen could actually see the towering white cliff face of White Rocks Mountain from their home. This will remind generations of future Vermonters of Bob Stafford's towering achievements, and of the humanity of his spirit."

Sanders said, "Bob Stafford spent his career serving his fellow Vermonters both here and in Washington. He was a national leader on so many issues, including education, the environment, and human rights. Senator Stafford deservedly is widely respected by people of all political persuasions and it is important that his work be recognized in perpetuity by the renaming of the White Rocks National Recreation Area in his honor."

Welch said, "I am honored that one of my first acts as Vermont's Representative in Congress is the opportunity to honor the great legacy of Senator Stafford for his service to Vermont and our country. This is an appropriate tribute for a leader who brought a Vermont spirit and love for our state to his work in Washington."